

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

BOARD GAME

INVENTORS

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BOARD GAME

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/446,262, filed February 11, 2003, the content of which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to the field of board games, and more particularly to a board game system that provides multiple versions of play.

Description of the Related Art

[0003] The prior art includes different types of board games for play. A disadvantage of the prior art board games is the lack of different versions or games that may be played on a single board game apparatus.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The present invention is directed to board game system, which at least addresses the drawbacks existing in the prior art.

[0005] An aspect of the present invention includes a game board system including a bottom portion with a cup centered thereon; a rotatable member provided on the bottom portion, the rotatable member including first game piece apertures therein; an outer top portion provided on the bottom portion; and an inner stationary top portion superposed on the rotatable frame and including second game piece apertures therein. Further, the rotatable member may include a rotatable frame provided in the bottom portion and rotatable about the cup; and a plurality of planar elements supported by the rotatable frame, each planar element including a plurality of the first game piece apertures. The planar element may be substantially pie shaped, having either a plurality of wedge-shaped segments or formed as a single "full pie" of 360°.

[0006] In a further aspect of the present invention, the rotatable frame includes a central aperture and the cup includes a step extending around the exterior surface thereof, wherein the step supports the rotatable frame thereon with the central aperture positioned around the cup; and handles provided on the rotatable frame to control rotation of the rotatable frame. Pointers may be provided on at least one handle. Further, the inner stationary top portion is substantially planar and disk shaped. Additionally, the inner stationary top portion includes a central aperture therein and the cup includes a step extending around the exterior surface thereof, wherein the step supports the inner stationary top portion thereon with the center aperture positioned around the cup. The cup includes a pair of elements extending outwardly therefrom, and the inner stationary top portion includes a pair of cut outs cooperating with the pair of elements to prevent rotation of the inner stationary top portion around the cup. Further, an o-ring may be provided on the exterior surface of the cup to hold the inner stationary top portion stationary relative to the cup. The game board system may include a top opening provided in the cup; and a cover provided in the top opening, the cover holding game pieces within the cup when not in play.

[0007] In a further aspect of the present invention, the bottom portion includes a box having a bottom; and a plurality of walls extending from the bottom and surrounding the rotatable member, the outer top portion, and the inner top portion. Further, the box has a substantially square interior receiving portion; and the outer top portion is formed as a generally plate-shaped member having a substantially square shape with corners removed, so that corners of the box and the removed corners of the outer top portion form openings allowing game pieces to be removed by tipping the combined box and outer top portion as a unit toward any corner to dump the game pieces out from that corner. The rotatable member is substantially planar with a circular periphery; and the outer top portion including a central aperture therein, so that the rotatable member is positioned within the central aperture. Further, the first game piece apertures include some game piece apertures having

a diameter that allows passage of a game piece and some game piece apertures having a diameter that prevents passage of a game piece; and the second game piece apertures having a diameter that allows passage of a game piece; wherein a second game piece aperture in the inner top portion aligned with a first game piece aperture in the rotatable member having a diameter that allows passage of a game piece, allows passage of a game piece through to the bottom portion; and a second game piece aperture in the inner top portion aligned with a first game piece aperture in the rotatable member having a diameter that prevents passage of a game piece, prevents passage of a game piece through to the bottom portion.

[0008] A further aspect of the present invention provides a method of operating a game board system including providing a game board system including a bottom portion with a cup centered thereon; a rotatable member provided on the bottom portion, the rotatable member including first game piece apertures therein; an outer top portion provided on the bottom portion; and an inner stationary top portion superposed on the rotatable frame and including second game piece apertures therein; providing game pieces; positioning the game pieces at the periphery of the game board system; and moving a game piece from the periphery of the game board system to a second aperture in the inner stationary top portion in accordance with the roll of a die. Further, the method may include moving a game piece to a series of second apertures in the inner stationary top portion in accordance with multiple rolls of a die. The method may include moving a game piece from a second aperture in the inner stationary top portion into the cup in accordance with a roll of a die; and rotating the rotatable member and stopping at a position according to a roll of a die.

[0009] In a further aspect of the present invention, the first game piece apertures include some game piece apertures having a diameter that allows passage of a game piece and some game piece apertures having a diameter that prevents passage of a game piece, and the second game piece apertures having a diameter that allows passage of a game piece, the method further including stopping the rotatable member at a position according to a roll of

a die; aligning a second game piece aperture in the inner top portion with a first game piece aperture in the rotatable member having a diameter that allows passage of a game piece, allowing passage of a game piece through to the bottom portion; and aligning a second game piece aperture in the inner top portion with a first game piece aperture in the rotatable member having a diameter that prevents passage of a game piece, preventing passage of a game piece through to the bottom portion. Further, the rotatable member includes a rotatable frame provided in the bottom portion and rotatable about the cup, and a plurality of planar elements supported by the rotatable frame, each the planar element including a plurality of the first game piece apertures, the method further including exchanging the plurality of planar elements for a second set of planar elements, changing the pattern of first game piece apertures therein.

[0010] According to another aspect of the present invention, a game board system is provided that includes a bottom portion, a rotatable member rotatably supported relative to the bottom portion, the rotatable member including first game piece apertures therein, an outer top portion provided on the bottom portion, and an inner stationary top portion superposed on the rotatable member and including second game piece apertures therein. The rotatable member may include a rotatable frame provided in the bottom portion and rotatably supported on the bottom portion, and a plurality of planar elements supported by the rotatable frame, each planar element including a plurality of the first game piece apertures. Moreover, each planar element may be substantially pie shaped. Additionally, the rotatable frame may include a central aperture, and a cup may be provided on the bottom portion, the cup including a step extending around the exterior surface thereof, wherein the step supports the rotatable frame thereon with the central aperture positioned around the cup.

[0011] According to a further aspect of the present invention, the game board system is provided with a rotatable member that is configured as a generally planar disc-shaped member rotatably supported at one of the center thereof and the periphery thereof relative to

the bottom portion, and the disc-shaped member includes a plurality of the first game piece apertures therein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] The above, and other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be made apparent from the following description of the preferred embodiments, given as nonlimiting examples, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a top perspective view of an assembled game system according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a top perspective view of the game system of Figure 1, with an o-ring seal removed so that the top layer may be lifted;

Figure 3 is a top view of the top piece of the game system of Figure 1 removed from the game system;

Figure 4 is a top perspective view of the game system of Figure 1 with the top piece removed exposing the second rotatable layer of the game system of Figure 1;

Figure 5 is a top perspective view of the game system of Figure 1 with the top piece removed exposing the second rotatable layer and with one of the sections removed from the game system of Figure 1;

Figure 6 is a top perspective view of the game system of Figure 1 with the top piece and several of the sections of the second rotatable layer removed exposing the frame of the game system of Figure 1;

Figure 7 is a top perspective view of the four sections of the rotatable layer removed from the game system of Figure 1;

Figure 8 is a top perspective view of the frame of the rotatable layer removed from the game system of Figure 1;

Figure 9 is an enlarged perspective view of a portion of the second rotatable layer showing a detent engaging a spring loaded stop of the game system of Figure 1;

Figure 10 depicts an alternative embodiment for the second rotatable layer;

Figure 11 is a perspective view of the frame removed from the game system of Figure 1;

Figure 12 is a perspective view of a game board top component 10 removed from the game system of Figure 1; and

Figure 13 is a perspective view of a box and center cup removed from the game system of Figure 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0013] The particulars shown herein are by way of example and for purposes of illustrative discussion of the embodiments of the present invention only and are presented in the cause of providing what is believed to be the most useful and readily understood description of the principles and conceptual aspects of the present invention. In this regard, no attempt is made to show structural details of the present invention in more detail than is necessary for the fundamental understanding of the present invention, the description is taken with the drawings making apparent to those skilled in the art how the forms of the present invention may be embodied in practice.

[0014] With reference to figures 1-13, reference numeral 1 denotes an embodiment of a game system of the present invention. While the function and application of the present invention have not been so far disclosed or accomplished, various suitable mechanical designs that could perform the function of this game board mechanism could be utilized. The structure of the present invention may be constructed of any suitable material such as, for example, plastic, wood, hard fiberboard, similar materials, or combinations thereof that are strong, lightweight, and of low cost.

[0015] Figure 1 shows the assembled game board system 1. The game board system 1 includes a bottom portion 2 with cup 4 centered thereon, an outer game board top 10, a rotatable element or frame 11 that supports a plurality of pie shaped members d, and a top piece 8 having a plurality of game piece holes 9 and a center hole 12 therein. In this embodiment, the top piece 8 is fixed or stationary, and is secured to the center cup 4 with the o-ring a. The handles or knobs b are provided on the rotatable element or frame 11 to rotate portions of the assembly, as described below. The handles b may serve as pointers, or, alternatively, pointers may be affixed to one or more of the handles at the top thereof.

[0016] The game board system 1 may be used for a variety of games. For example, a simple game for four players might involve moving a player's game pieces 5 from the periphery of the game board system 1 to the center cup 4. A die with six faces (*e.g.*, 1, 1, 1, 2, red, yellow) may be used. Players roll the die and move in turn. If a number is rolled, game piece(s) 5 may be moved. If a color is rolled, the handles b are moved CW (clockwise) for yellow, CCW (counter clockwise) for red, 36 degrees (in this example) to a detent. Alternatively, a plurality of dice may be used in play.

[0017] As the rotary movement of the rotatable element or frame 11 occurs, holes in the top piece 8 may become aligned with holes below causing a sink hole and allowing the game piece 5 to fall into the box 2 below and be lost to play. The game has thus 'swallowed' the game piece 5. With luck and strategy, the player will move some of the game pieces 5 to the cup 4, scoring points. As multiple game pieces 5 populate the top board 8 and when the rotation occurs, several game pieces 5 may drop at the same time.

[0018] The bottom portion 2 may include a sturdy game box, which also may serve as a storage container for the game board elements. The bottom portion 2 also serves to contain the game pieces 5 that disappear into the sinkholes. The game board elements never have to be removed from the box 2. This is a user friendly and efficient feature. At the end of a game cycle, players can remove any game pieces 5 from the center axle cup 4 and tilt the

game box 2 toward any corner while slightly flipping it and the game pieces 5 roll out from the corner due to the opening 3 formed at each corner between the outer game board top 10 and the box corners. The openings 3 may be any suitable shape, and in the present embodiment are triangularly shaped. A fitting o-ring 8 serves to retain the removable inner game board component 8 that includes the area of game piece movement when tilting the entire game board system 1 at the end of each game cycle for the purpose of retrieving the game pieces 5 that were swallowed or disappearing into the bottom of the box 2 through sinkholes during a game cycle. Alternatively, another suitable method of quick release and positive retention can be adapted.

[0019] A cup 4 is provided in a central location in the bottom of the box 2. The cup 4 is securely fastened to the box 2 by any suitable fastening device such as, for example, glue. The cup 4 may have any suitable dimensions and may be formed of any suitable material, and in the present embodiment is formed of plastic. The cup 4 may measure approximately 2.625" in diameter and approximately 1.750" in height. The cup 4 provides a receptacle to store the game pieces 5 when not in use. The cup 4 also functions as an axle for the rotatable component of the game system. A circular piece of material such as, for example, soft foam cut to fit tightly in the top inside portion of the cup 4 may be provided to keep the game pieces 5 securely stored when the game system is not in use. A plurality of o-rings may also be provided which may be used to keep the game pieces of each player contained during play in a stand by area, outside of the periphery of the bottom portion 2. The game system 1 may include any suitable number of o-rings and in the present embodiment includes four soft o-rings. Further, the o-rings may be any suitable size and in the present embodiment measure approximately 0.250" x 2.500" I.D. The game pieces 5 include small balls or marbles. The game system 1 may include a total of forty game pieces 5, and the game pieces 5 may be distinguishable by color or design to identify to which player each set of alike game pieces 5 belong.

[0020] As shown in figure 13, the cup 4 may include a first top step or flange 6 and a second bottom step or flange 7 on the outer surface thereof. The steps may be located within 1" of the top rim of the cup 4. The steps 6, 7 may be provided in any suitable manner, for example by rigidly attaching the steps 6, 7 to the cup 4 or forming the steps 6, 7 and the cup 4 unitarily and in one piece as a part of the cup 4 by a manufacturing process. The bottom step 7 is larger in diameter than the top step 6. The bottom step 7 may be of any suitable size and in the present embodiment includes an approximate outside diameter that is 0.750" larger than the outside diameter of the cup 4 and approximately 0.3125" in height. The bottom step 7 provides the center support for the rotatable element 11 of the game board system 1. The bottom step 7 also provides a center frictional surface for the rotatable element 11 and keeps the rotatable element 11 properly aligned relative to the stationary components. The top step 6 provides the center support for the top piece 8. Of course, the steps or flanges 6 and 7 are merely representative of one manner in which the top piece 8 and rotatable element 11 may be supported, and the flanges may be replaced by any suitable support, such as a conical inner support or a suitable outer peripheral support of the top piece 8 and rotatable element 11, as is well known to those skilled in the art.

[0021] The rotatable element or frame 11 serves as a storage tray for the four symmetrical pie shaped flat components d. Each pie shaped flat component d may be of any suitable size and in the present embodiment, has an approximate thickness of 0.125" and an arc on the smaller side that is slightly larger than the O.D. of the cup 4 to prevent binding during rotation. The rotatable storage tray 11 is made of any suitable flat material and in any suitable size and in the present embodiment has an approximate thickness of 0.1875" with a shape similar to that of a four spoked wagon wheel. The outer portion of the rotatable element 11 is supported on a flat ring surface that may be provided by any suitable material on the outer game board top component 10 such as, for example, by attaching a flat ring surface to the outer game board top component 10 or by forming the flat ring surface

unitarily and in one piece with the outer game board top component 10 by a manufacturing process. This flat ring surface also serves as the outer friction surface for the rotatable element 11. The outer diameter of the rotatable element 11 of the game board system may be of any suitable size and in the present embodiment is approximately 14". Handles or knobs b (Figure 8) are provided on the rotatable element 11 to rotate the rotatable element 11. Detents f are provided on the periphery of the rotatable element 11. The handles may serve as pointers, or a pointer may be provided on at least one of the handles. The detents f allow accurate, consistent stops when the rotatable frame 11 is turned CW or CCW. As shown in figure 9, a detent f cooperates with a spring loaded stop g, which provides positive control for landing in the desired position when the rotatable element 11 is rotated. Typically, a single spring loaded stop g is provided on the game board top component 10 at a position adjacent the periphery of the rotatable element 11 to engage one of a plurality of spaced detents f (Figure 8). Of course, more than a single spring loaded stop may be provided if desired.

[0022] The four pie shaped flat components d have holes 13 of varying sizes and shapes which are arranged to camouflage which holes will allow the game pieces 5 contained by the inner game board top 8 to pass through to the bottom of the box 2 when the rotatable element 11 is rotated as dictated by the rules of game play. The outer corners of each pie shaped component d may be notched in a manner that results in holding the pie shaped components 11 securely in place on the rotatable element 11 when they come in contact with a raised surface located on the outer rim of the rotatable element at 90° intervals. Another method of securely holding the pie shaped components d in the rotatable tray 11 is a simple recess that captures the pie shaped components d. It should be noted that one of the distinguishing features of this design is that it allows for many arrangements of the order of the pattern of holes 13 large enough to allow the game pieces to pass through to the bottom of the box 2 by flipping the pieces d over or rearranging their order. No two pie shaped components d

have the same pattern, arrangement or location of holes 13 and the greater number of pie shaped components d that come with the game system, the greater the number of four unit arrangements or combinations that can be accomplished. Alternatively, the frame 11 may be constructed so that the frame 11 is divided into more or less than four pie shaped components d. In such an alternative embodiment, the arc of each pie shaped component d would be smaller or larger than 90°, accordingly. For example, if the frame 11 were constructed to accept three pie shaped components d, each pie shaped component d would occupy one third of the circumference of the frame 11 and would include an arc of 120°. If the frame 11 were constructed to accept six pie shaped components d, for example, each pie shaped component d would occupy one sixth of the circumference of the frame 11 and would include an arc of 60°.

[0023] In another alternative embodiment shown in Figure 10, the individual components d may be formed as a single component d'. The single component d' may be suitably sized and configured to be mounted on the frame 11 for rotation therewith. Alternatively, single component 11 may be sized to correspond to the inner and outer diameters of the frame 11 of Figure 8 and be provided with the handles b and detents f. In this alternative (not shown), the frame 11 could be omitted and the inner diameter of single component d' would be rotatably supported, for example, on the bottom step or flange 7 of cup 4.

[0024] The inner game board component 8 is circular in shape and is made of a suitable flat material. The inner game board component 8 has any suitable size and in the present embodiment is approximately 13.750" in diameter and 0.1875" thick, with a center hole 12 that fits over the cup 4 and rests on the top step 6 located on the outer surface of the cup 4. The center hole 12 also include detents c that prevent rotation of the inner game board component 8 by engagement with the stops 13 of the cup 4. The top step 6 also provides for the necessary clearance between the pie shaped components d which are sometimes rotated during game play, and the inner game board component 8 which remains stationary. The

mechanism may include similarly shaped notches and protrusions that engage between the inner game board top 8 and the top step 6 of the cup 4 or some other suitable and simple device to prevent rotation, locate and prevent the inner top game board component 8 from rotating. The inner game board component 8 may include any suitable number holes and in the present embodiment, has 168 holes, each of which are slightly larger than the game pieces 5, arranged in a pattern that is essentially four symmetrical quadrants and it serves as the area about which game piece movement occurs during play.

[0025] The top outer game board component 10 may be made of a suitable flat material. The top outer game board component 10 may be of any suitable size and in the present embodiment is approximately 0.125" in thickness, and approximately 14.750" square with the corners removed to provide an opening in the shape of a 1.500" right triangle to facilitate removal of game pieces 5 from the box bottom 2 at the end of each game cycle without having to remove the game board mechanism from the box 2. There is a centrally located hole 14 in the outer game board component 10 that is slightly larger in diameter than the rotatable element 11 of the game board system to provide clearance for the rotatable element 11 and to ease the process of rearranging the interchangeable pie shaped components d that represent the field of sinkholes. This process can be performed and completed in approximately one minute or less in most cases between game cycles.

[0026] Additionally, pairs of position indicators 15 are located at equal intervals in close proximity to the edge of the 14.750" outer game board component 10. These position indicators 15 may be colored dots that serve to reference the position of the rotatable tray 11 and the field of sinkholes. Each pair of position indicators 15 consists of two different colors which are also different from the color of the outer game board component 10. As an example, each pair of position indicators may consist of one yellow, and one red dot and the color of the outer game board component 10 may be blue. An imaginary line drawn from the center of the game board system and bisecting each pair of position indicator dots 15 would

reveal each yellow dot to be on the same side of the imaginary line if it were rotated from pair to pair in the same direction and stopped between each pair of position indicators 15 and the same would be true of the red dot position indicators 15. This arrangement serves to establish which direction to rotate the field of sinkholes in the form of the rotatable tray 11 and pie shaped sinkhole components d when directed to do so by the color die according to the rules governing game play. The quantity of pairs of position indicator dots 15 as an example may consist of ten pairs but as many as twenty pairs or more are possible. The quantity of pairs equally spaced serve to control the actual distance of travel of the field of sinkholes and the rotatable tray 11 per move.

[0027] A pointer is attached to the outer top face of the rim of the rotatable tray 11 in two places, 180° apart, and passes between the inner and outer top game board components which have a clearance or separation between them. The clearance may be approximately 0.125". This top face of the pointer is arranged in a manner that extends over the position indicator dots 15 and prevents interference when removing the top inner game board component for the purpose of rearranging or interchanging the four pie shaped components d that include the field of sinkholes. One half of the top face of each of the two pointer components is yellow and the other half is red, relative to the pairs of position indicator dots 15.

[0028] A simple detent device or mechanism is attached at one location to the underside of the outer game board component 10. This detent device or component engages in notches in the outer rim or periphery of the rotatable tray 11 that contains the four pie shaped components d that include the field of sinkholes. The quantity of these notches are equal in number and distance of spacing relative to the quantity and spacing of the pairs of indicator dots 15. At each position the detent device or mechanism engages the rim or outer periphery of the rotatable tray 11, the pointer is at rest at a point directly over the top of a pair of position indicator dots 15, bisecting the space between the pair of indicator dots 15.

[0029] There may be two dies that serve to control game piece movements, options of play, rotation of the field of sinkholes, and mandatory game piece movement or options of play. One die contains a number on each of the six surfaces that form the cube shape. The other die contains a different color on each of the six surfaces that form the cube shape. In this example, one color would be red and one color would be yellow. When either color appears on the top when the die is rolled a mandatory rotation of the field of sinkholes is required and the color lets the player know which direction it must be rotated. The number that appears on the top of the number die in the same roll indicates the mandatory number of detent positions the pointer, hence the rotatable element 11 and field of sinkholes must be moved for that player's turn.

[0030] The other four colors on the color die represent one color for each potential player and each color matches the color of ten of the forty game pieces. Each quadrant of the inner game board component is marked with one of these four colors in such a way as to establish one of these four colors and quadrants as representing one of the potential four players as well as which direction a game piece must be moved as directed by the roll of the dice. As an example, if a player rolls a green on one die and a three on the other die during his or her turn, one of his or her game pieces can or must be moved in the direction of the green player or quadrant according to the rules governing game play.

[0031] Thin templates can be developed and offered as future add on features that simply lay on top of the original inner game board component that would provide a totally different theme and version of play. These templates facilitate a different pattern and quantity of spaces or holes to move game pieces about on the original game board system according to the rules and themes of various and different versions of play. These thin templates must engage the original inner game board component 8 in a manner that allows for a quick change process. The quick change process may be performed by any suitable device.

[0032] The sum of the features and design of this invention, a game board system and associated components as disclosed, expand the present invention from a new and unique board game, to that of a new and unique board game system or package never before accomplished. Virtually dozens of distinguishable games can be based upon this present invention. With the present invention, players compete against one another, and against the game mechanism simultaneously.

[0033] The present invention is a multi-level rotary game board system named "SINK HOLE". Sink Hole includes a system of games in which the game board can swallow the game pieces. Additionally, Sink Hole is a game system whereby a variety of diverse games may be played on the device. Several such games are included herein as examples of the games which may be designed for use with the device. As described above, the game system includes two or more layers of material which may be fixed or concentrically rotatable and which have an arrangement of holes which may or may not be aligned between or among the various layers. Some layer(s) may be fixed so that when a rotating disk passes over/under a fixed disk, holes may be aligned allowing the game piece to fall through to a container, below. In the embodiment shown, the layers are rigid plastic sheet, circular, approximately fourteen inches in diameter; of varying thickness with circular holes laser cut of various diameters.

[0034] The holes may be of various shapes so that when the layers move to align the holes, various shapes may result which may allow a game piece of matching cross section and smaller size to fall through the aligned holes.

[0035] In the embodiment disclosed herein, a two layer game board system is presented for simplicity. Additional layers may be included which include bearing surfaces and shims to allow ease of operation. The bottom layer of the embodiment includes four ninety degree sectors which fit snugly into the device. The bottom layer is movable CW or CCW by either of two small handles arranged vertically through the top of the game board. The top layer

of the embodiment is a single, round piece which does not rotate. Game play involves moving the bottom layer CW or CCW causing the holes to (sometimes) align with holes in the layer above. When holes become aligned, game pieces are allowed to disappear through the “game field” into a container below. As the player(s) in turn advance game pieces across the board, from the periphery toward the center, as in one of several versions of games which may be played on the system, game events occur which require the rotary piece to move CW or CCW and some of the holes in the rotary piece become aligned with holes in the layers above. The unlucky game piece positioned in such a hole disappears into the game board and is lost to play. The present embodiment of the invention fits snugly onto the base of the box in which the game is contained and uses marbles as game pieces. The cross section of the holes in the layers of the game may be of varying sizes and shapes.

[0036] The lower layers may be one piece or made in sectors. In the disclosed embodiment, ninety degree sectors are provided so that their positions may be exchanged and they may be turned over providing a large variety of combinations so that players may not memorize the board. Extra sectors may be provided with the system to provide hundreds of combinations of sink hole locations.

[0037] The game board system 1 of the present invention may be used to play many different versions of play. Mission Objectives have been developed to create a variety of play versions for the game system. The same game board and rules are used in each version. Several examples of such versions are disclosed below.

[0038] A first example of a version of game play to be played on the game board system 1 of the present invention is the Short Range Mission. The Offensive Mission Objective is to get as many Offensive Team Members into the “Eye of the Zone” (the center cup 4) as possible. Certain holes adjacent the cup 4 will be designated entrances to the Eye of the Zone. Landing on one of the two designated entrances to the Eye of the Zone allows the offensive team member landing on a designated entrance to spend the rest of the mission in

the Eye of the Zone and be counted as 1 point at the end of the mission. The Perfect Mission Score is 20 points.

[0039] The Critical Offensive Strategic Objective is that once there is at least one representative of each offensive team in the Eye of the Zone, the remaining Offensive Team Members are allowed to detain any defensive opponents they land on in the Zone and send them to the Eye. No points are scored for detaining defensive opponents but it weakens the defense. The sooner in the Mission the Offensive Team gains the ability to detain the defense, the sooner they expand their strategic options to the maximum allowable. The detained team member can eventually earn his or her release to rejoin the mission under the provisions of the standard rules.

[0040] Offensive Team Members that go “Out of Bounds” are not sent to The Eye for detainment as is the case with defensive team members that leave The Zone. Offensive Team Members must serve their detainment period in one of the Entry Portals (*i.e.*, the designated entrances) to The Eye. This blocks offensive team members from entering The Eye until the Team Leader of the detainee meets the requirements for release, which are the same as winning the release of detained defensive members from The Eye. In the event that an offensive team has both entry portals to the Eye blocked and a third offensive team member goes out of bounds, the team member that goes out of bounds must be sacrificed to The Zone at the corner nearest the location where the Out of Bounds Rule was broken.

[0041] The Defensive Mission Objective is to capture as many offensive opponents as possible before they can get into the Eye of the Zone or get swallowed by the Zone. Any offensive opponents the Zone swallows are a lost opportunity for the defense to score a point. Each offensive opponent that is captured scores 1 point at the end of the mission. Captured opponents are sent back to the Team’s Base Camp that captures them. Perfect Mission Score is 20 points.

[0042] The Critical Defensive Strategic Objective is to prevent the Offensive Team from acquiring the ability to detain Defensive Team Members for as long as possible. The more time that passes, the larger the defensive force in the Zone becomes, the easier it becomes to defend the Entry Portals to the Eye and the easier it becomes to capture offensive team members. It is critical to defend the Eye.

[0043] The Mission Cycle is complete when neither Offensive Team has any Team Members left in their Base Camp or the Zone.

[0044] A second example of a version of game play to be played on the game board system 1 of the present invention is the Long Range Mission. There are two differences between the Short Range Mission and Long Range Mission of Rotation. The Offensive Objective in the Long Range Mission is a greater distance from each Offensive Teams's Zone Entry Portals. The offensive objective is now the Left and Right Zone Entry Portals of each Offensive Team. In other words, the Green Team, for example, must get into the Eye of the Zone through the Blue Team's, for example, Left and Right Zone Entry Portals, and vice versa. These positions are also where Blue Team members that step out of bounds are sent for detention. Detention is served in the portal on the same side of the Zone as the Out of Bounds infraction occurs (left/right). Offensive Team Members serving Out of Bounds detainment in the other Offensive Team's Entry Portals are sacrificed to The Zone if they are still blocking the Portal when an Offensive Team Member is prevented from carrying out orders to Enter the Zone through the blocked portal, or they are ordered to an Entry Portal that is occupied by a member of either Offensive Team.

[0045] The rules for moving the game pieces during play of various versions of the game system is denoted Navigating in the Zone. The color die controls the direction of team member movement in the Zone and the number die controls the number of steps that may be moved. They also control the positioning and movement of sinkholes when either yellow or red come up on the number die.

[0046] Rule One is The First Step Rule. The first step of a team member move must be in the direction that matches the color die that was rolled by the team leader.

[0047] Rule Two is The Change of Direction Rule. A team member can change direction on the second step of a move in any of the four directions but is not required to do so. Only one change of direction is allowed per move and it must be taken on the second step. A different version of play which is accomplished with the same rules but a different set of objectives may also utilize a “Special Rule Change” by making the only allowable change of direction for the 3rd step only. This change effectively reduces movement range, options, and frequency of occurrence. A new set of circumstances require, or at least effectively appear to require new and different strategies. Some of the planned “versions” will only require changing the mission objectives and all the standard rules will stay the same.

[0048] Rule Three is the Out of Bounds rule. A team member is considered “Out of Bounds” when a move takes that team member out of the Zone to a position with no hole. Any team member who goes “Out of Bounds” is immediately sent to “The Penalty Box”. On limited occasions a team leader will send a team member Out of Bounds on purpose for strategic reasons and in rare circumstances it could result in winning the challenge. In most instances a team member is forced Out of Bounds by being the only team member in the Zone, or the only team member that can make the move and not land in an existing sinkhole.

[0049] Rule Four is the Mandatory Movement Requirement. All moves must be taken regardless of consequence by one of the team members in the Zone.

[0050] Another example of a version of play is the Eye of the Zone. In the Eye of the Zone, players will be facing opponents in the Zone with different abilities to affect mission objectives, depending on the specific Zone Challenge. Some have the power and authority to capture other team members and take them back to their base camp, and in a few challenges can even sacrifice them to the Zone. Others can only confront other team members and send them to “The Eye of the Zone”. The Eye of the Zone is located in the

center of the Zone and is primarily used as a holding facility but at times may be used for other purposes as directed by Mission Objectives that take affect the moment a confrontation takes place between opposing team members. These rules play a significant role in Zone Strategy. Knowing when and how to apply them is vital to all mission objectives.

[0051] Rule One provides that as soon as a team member arrives in the Eye of the Zone, that team immediately loses all Zone entry rights that permit team members to enter the zone from base camp. The only open entry portal to the zone for that team is the one that can be used to free detained team leaders one at a time from the eye of the Zone, which requires the team leader to roll a one and his or her team color at the same time. This allows the team member to leave the Eye of the Zone by landing in the team's center Zone entry portal, then back into Base Camp. If a sinkhole happens to be located at the center team entry portal, the team member is lost to the Zone. When the team status returns to no team members in the Eye of the Zone, the main entry portals are reopened for use to that team's members who are still in the base camp.

[0052] Rule Two provides that when a team leader has one or more members detained in the Eye of the Zone and rolls the required combination to free a team member, the move must be used to free a team member who must immediately return to base camp to be debriefed.

[0053] Another example of a version of play is Entering the Zone. Each player has three entry portals that link the team base camp to the Zone, and each entry portal is ringed with the team's color. A different color number one is located next to each entry portal and is used to identify which entry portal a team member has been instructed to enter from base camp whenever a player rolls a Zone entry combination with the dice. A Zone entry combination is the number one and any team color other than the team color assigned to the player who rolled the dice.

[0054] Rule One is the Minimum Engagement Rule. Every time a player rolls a one and one of the other three team colors, that player must send a team member into the Zone unless

one of the following conditions exists: (a) There are already three team members in the zone, which satisfies the Minimum Engagement Rule. The player can send in a team member for strategic reasons but is not required to do so. There is no maximum limit on the number of team members a player can have in the Zone at once; or (b) There are no team members left in the player's base camp. Even when a sinkhole is located at the entry portal, a player must send a team member into that entry portal due to the minimum engagement rule and sacrifice a team member. The only exception is detailed in the next rule.

[0055] Rule Two is the Loss of Zone Entry Rights. When a player has one or more team members being detained in the Eye of the Zone, no team members are permitted to enter the Zone, under any circumstances. In most instances, this is a disadvantage but it can also save a team member from being lost to a sinkhole located at an Entry Portal. Rule Two always overrides the Minimum Engagement Rule.

[0056] Rule Three. If a team member is required to enter the Zone through an Entry Portal that is occupied by a fellow teammate, one of them must be sent to the Eye of the Zone unless the team's Zone Entry Rights are suspended due to Rule Two.

[0057] Rule Four. When a player rolls a Zone Entry while Zone Entry Rights are suspended, a team member who's already in the Zone must take the one step in the direction indicated by the color die, regardless of outcome. If the player does not have any team members in the Zone, the turn is lost.

[0058] Most of the game piece movement rules apply to each version of play with the primary difference between versions of play being the objective, or what is required to win. Simplified rules and versions can be applied that allow children who are old enough to play a game with marbles or small balls, but not quite ready to play adult level versions, to enjoy this unique game board experience.

[0059] An enticing element of this new and unique board game is the tremendous amount of strategies and combinations of strategies that can be developed and employed by the

players. This heightens player perception that greater skills can be developed over opponents which may create an advantage over opponents. This in turn has a natural tendency to create a highly competitive atmosphere among players and further stimulates fun and excitement, resulting in the ultimate game experience.

[0060] The potential to develop additional versions of play in the future than can be played on the original game board system is tremendous. It will only require the development of new rules and a game board top component that can be installed or removed in seconds, even by a child.

[0061] A broad range of game experiences result from playing this unique board game due to the fact that it can be played between children, between adults, and even between children and adults with no advantage due to age or experience, depending on which version is played.

[0062] The following information provides a basic description of several different versions of play, however none of the young children's versions are included. These seven versions can be expanded by simply varying a few details of the "Mission" or objective. In essence, more than one version of each named version can be offered in many cases, each providing a vastly different game experience.

[0063] The basic rules governing game piece movement apply to every version of play.

[0064] Four Player Versions. The Rotation Four Player Version requires four players that form two teams and square off in the Zone. This challenge requires two Mission Cycles per game cycle since each combined team must complete an Offensive Mission and a Defensive Mission. Players also get to choose the degree of difficulty for the Rotation Challenge. There is a Long Range Mission version and a Short Range Mission version. By simply changing the location of the offensive objective, advantage can be taken of an opportunity to enjoy two distinctly different game experiences at no additional cost. Two rounds of play are required to complete a game play cycle. Each team plays a round of offense and a round

of defense. This version provides players the opportunity to be in a full offensive or full defensive mode for an entire mission cycle. Each combined team is required to complete one “Offense Only” and one “Defense Only” mission cycle. The scores for each cycle are added and the combined team with the most points wins the Game Cycle.

[0065] Arch Rivals requires four players that form four teams. This challenge requires one Mission Cycle that tests team ability to balance offensive and defensive mission objectives at the same time. Ten of the thirty opponents you may encounter (ten per opponent) in the Zone can capture and permanently remove team members from the Zone, they are your Arch Rivals. The other twenty opponents you may encounter can only detain your team members by sending them to the Eye of the Zone so they’re only half as dangerous. Each of your other three opponents will be facing identical circumstances. Each player has one Arch Rival and two rivals. Each player’s Arch Rival is the facing player; the rivals are the player to the left and to the right of each player. The Mission Objective is to capture as many opponents as possible by landing on an occupied position in the Zone. Captured opponents are held in the base camps to be counted at the end of the game. Capturing an Arch Rival scores two points; capturing a rival scores one point. One of each opponent must be captured before a player can capture a second one of any color. In the event of a tie score, the players who tied play a sudden death round with three team members each. Once the team member is captured, that team is eliminated. In the event nobody captures an opponent during a sudden death playoff, the last team member in the Zone wins. If there are only two team members left in the zone and one of them goes out of bounds, the team with the member still in the zone wins.

[0066] Against All Odds requires four players that form four teams. This challenge requires four Mission Cycles to complete a game cycle. Each team must enter the Zone to accomplish their mission knowing they are outnumbered by a three to one margin. Three different teams will be fiercely competing to capture as many of the ten team members sent

into the Zone as possible, it is the primary mission. Each team has one Against All Odds mission and three Seek and Capture missions. The scores from all four mission cycles are added and the team with the highest score wins.

[0067] Infiltration requires four players. Infiltration can be played as four separate teams or two teams against two teams. This challenge requires each team to infiltrate the base camps of one or more opponents and to defend against opponents trying to infiltrate its base camp. Several distinct versions can be developed that provide different game experiences. Additionally, Infiltration versions can easily be developed to accommodate two player game versions as well.

[0068] Two Player Versions. Flanked requires three players. This challenge requires three mission cycles to complete. Each player must complete two Seek and Capture missions and one Two Against One mission. The scores for all three missions are combined and the player with the highest score wins.

[0069] Two Against One requires three players. This challenge requires three mission cycles to complete. Each player must complete one mission to defend the team base camp from two teams competing for invasion points and two invasion missions, one against each opponent. The scores for all three missions are combined and the player with the highest score wins.

[0070] One Player Versions. Survivors Entering the Zone Alone. This challenge tests the player's ability to lead four teams at once to accomplish mission objectives. Players can establish a personal best score that provides something to aim for. The higher the personal best score, the harder it is to surpass. Two and possibly three versions can be based on this theme by establishing mission objectives that present different degrees of difficulty.

[0071] The initial board game package includes a unique board game system and a dozen versions of play. One very unique feature of play that results from this unique game board system is that opponents not only face each other in competition, they also have to consider

the game board system is an unpredictable opponent as well. Each player has all holes at his disposal when moving game pieces about the field of play to accomplish offensive and defensive objectives simultaneously, but they must also be wary of existing sinkholes that can swallow their game pieces.

[0072] The real hazard this unique game board system provides is that the sinkholes can travel and move from one hole location to another. Players never know when or if this phenomena will occur, in which direction these sinkholes will move, or how far they will move or travel to further perplex or challenge the players. Further, the sinkholes are hard to identify because they hide in the camouflage of different sizes and shapes. Developing an instinct for assessing which ones pose the most danger at any given time during play is a skill highly competitive players will strive for.

[0073] Another unique feature of this game board system is that dozens of random pattern sinkhole fields are possible by simply and quickly shuffling four sinkhole templates and putting them in the rotatable sinkhole tray. This unique combination of play features provides players with an astounding number of strategies to develop and employ and a continuous change of circumstances that may require several strategy changes during a game cycle. This unique combination of play features combined with a dozen versions of play that provide distinctly different game experiences and levels of challenge almost guarantees players will always be challenged, even after years and years of play.

[0074] This unique game board mechanism in its basic introductory form can accomplish all those things even before considering that by simply laying a theme template on top of the original 168 hole game board play area, another new and unique game can be created and played on the game board system. Dozens of new and unique game experiences can result from developing theme templates and corresponding game rules.

[0075] Another advantage this unique game board system offers is the time required for set up and take down of the game itself. Players simply remove the box top the game board

system mechanism is housed in, pass out the ten marbles or small balls, or other various shaped game pieces, to each player, then pick the version of play. To put the game away players simply store the game pieces in the center cup, which also serves as an axle for the rotatable sinkhole field, and replace the game box top.

[0076] Although the invention has been described with reference to an exemplary embodiment, it is understood that the words that have been used are words of description and illustration, rather than words of limitation. Changes may be made within the purview of the appended claims, as presently stated and as amended, without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention in its aspects. Although the invention has been described with reference to particular means, materials and embodiments, the invention is not intended to be limited to the particulars disclosed. Rather, the invention extends to all functionally equivalent structures, methods, and uses such as are within the scope of the appended claims. Moreover, the examples of the types of games described above are but a few of the many types of games which may be played using the "sinkhole" game system of the present invention.